

NEW JERSEY

1999-2000
Guidelines and
Application

ORIGINAL

BEST PRACTICES

Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 22, 1999

Category	Safe Learning Environment	(Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.)
Practice Name	Project Yellow Jackets: A Safe Passage	
Number of Schools with Practice:	1 (If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.)	
County	Hudson	
District (Proper Name)	Jersey City	School District
District Address	Jersey City Public Schools 346 Claremont Avenue Jersey City, NJ 07305	
District Telephone	201-915-6582	Fax 201-433-281 E-mail: Cepps@JCBOE.org
Chief School Administrator:	Dr. Richard A. DiPatri	
Nominated School #1	Dr. Charles P. DeFuccio School	
(Proper Name)	PS #39	
School Address	214 Plainfield Avenue Jersey City, NJ 07306	
School Telephone:	201-915-6560	Fax: 201-915-6563 E-mail:
School Principal:	Patricia Bryant	
Program Developer(s):	Dr. Charles T. Epps, Jr., Arlene Onnembo, Patricia Bryant	
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature		

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY

Approved: ☒ Yes ☐ No County Superintendent's Signature

NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEW JERSEY BEST PRACTICES 1999-2000 APPLICATION

Application Requirements:

- ◆ **RESPONSES to the information and the statements below must be ANONYMOUS.** No reference should be made to the names of the district or the school(s). Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in referring to the applicant in responding to the statements.
- ◆ **USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM on pages 1, 2 (if applicable) and 4 and THE NUMBER OF LINES SPECIFIED FOR RESPONSES to the statements.** Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
- ◆ Application must be **keyboarded on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Ten-point or larger computer font or twelve-pitch or larger typewriter font must be used.** (This sentence is in ten-point.)
- ◆ **KEYBOARDED RESPONSES** to the statements below must be **no more than a total of three pages.** Keyboard the statement followed by the response. Format your response to the number of lines specified.
- ◆ The information on page 4 and the keyboarded responses to statements must be printed or copied on one side of the page. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be printed or copied on one side of the page. Staple pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) and 4 and the keyboarded responses together.
- ◆ The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.
- ◆ The original and seven copies of the application must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by November 22, 1999, with the Itemized List of District Applications form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.
- ◆ **FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE PROCEDURES FOR SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION MAY RESULT IN THE ELIMINATION OF THE APPLICATION..**

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School	Grade Levels	Practice Name <u>Project Yellow Jackets: A Safe Passage</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary School	<u>PreK - 8</u>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Middle School		
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School		Number of Schools with Practice <u>1</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> High School		Number of Districts with Practice <u>1</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education	<input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Bilingual Education and Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support/Guidance and Counseling Programs (services contributing to high student achievement.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement (family involvement and partnerships with business, community and/or higher education.)	<input type="checkbox"/> World Languages

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated. **(Maximum of 50 lines for response)**
2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the *Core Curriculum Content* including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards** addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s). **(Maximum of 50 lines for response)**
3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. **(Maximum of 60 lines for response)**

*The May 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated. (Maximum of 50 lines for response)

Project Yellow Jackets initiated in April, 1998 is a unique program designed to involve the community and the school (PreK-8) in providing a safe passage for children living in an urban economically depressed area that has a large low income housing development and one of the highest crime rates in New Jersey. Objectives are:

1. To create a safe and secure school environment conducive to learning,
2. To foster collaboration and promote partnerships among parents, area residents, students and the school,
3. To prevent incidents of violence in and around the immediate school community and to foster school pride,
4. To reduce the suspension rate, especially the repeat suspension rate,
5. To assist students and families in dealing with anger and conflict,
6. To improve school attendance rates,
7. To improve academic achievement.

Via neighborhood posters, announcements on cable TV, flyers, and notices sent home from school, residents are informed about a town meeting concerning children's safety to be held in the community room of the area housing development. At the meeting, an impassioned plea is made by school and district administrators as well as parents for volunteers to form links in a safety chain as children pass on their journey to and from school.

From this meeting, **Project Yellow Jackets** is born. The program consists of 21 parents and area residents who are interviewed and selected by a district committee and assigned to patrol the neighborhood to monitor student activities in the immediate vicinity of the school. Safe passage workers receive training in conflict resolution and are viewed as problem solvers rather than enforcers. Their duties include but are not limited to spotting trouble and building positive relationships with students, staff, community residents, and local business persons. They report back to school administrators to help in identifying patterns and areas of special concern. Group meetings for training in problem solving are held as the parents assist school staff in identifying preventive measures and needed interventions. Consensus building is practiced on an everyday basis.

Workers are assigned to strategic areas identified and agreed upon by the school's School Based Management Team consisting of an administrator, parents, non instructional staff, and teachers. These posts are secured 45 minutes before the opening of school, 30 minutes after school begins, during all three lunch periods, and one hour after the close of the school day. Personnel is easily identified by the bright neon yellow jackets they wear, prompting their nickname "**the yellow jackets**". The project has been so effective that volunteers were subsequently paid a stipend from district monies.

The practice is innovative as it is the first such program in the district and the state; it is a bottom up model that emanates from the grass roots level and empowers the community to ring a safety net around their children; it is a self help rather than punitive program that emphasizes conflict resolution among not only children but also parents and area residents and makes a positive impact on all stakeholders.

The practice promotes high student achievement by (1) providing students with more opportunities to walk to school in a risk free environment and start their day "ready to learn," (2) reducing the amount of class time spent in resolving conflicts that develop before, during and after school which results in more time to learn; (3) making students accountable for their actions; (4) improving self-esteem of students and families; (4) developing increased problem solving skills.

The practice can be replicated in any district with similar neighborhood profiles. It requires a focused effort related to organization and development and a commitment and belief in strength of community. Minimal funding is needed to pay small stipends to workers and to provide identifying jackets. School Management Teams are instrumental in developing and conducting a needs assessment survey of the school, neighboring community, and existing agencies. A complete description of the program is available, along with copies of the needs assessment survey.

2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the Curriculum Content and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s). (Maximum of 50 lines for response)

As we approach the millennium, we find our citizenry, in particular, our children facing a national crisis: that of living with violence. The need to feel safe is near the base of Maslow's learning pyramid and yet violent acts perpetrated on and by our youth are escalating at an alarming rate. The ultimate goal of education - to produce lifelong learners who are caring contributing members of a global society cannot begin to be met without providing a safe harbor for our youngsters. Numerous studies in brain research address the deleterious effect that stress has on cognition and how improved self-esteem facilitates learning. **Project Yellow Jackets** fosters a belief in the value of children, their parents and the community at large.

Change theory dictates that when those affected by the change are involved in its initiation, there is a "buy in" that exacerbates the change process. This program is a direct response to requests from the children, parents and school staff to address the safety issue before and after school and during in-school lunch times. It grew out of an awareness of the number of violent acts occurring at 'down' times during the school day (on the way to and from school and during lunch hour). There is a high correlation between this program and all of the New Jersey Core Content Curriculum Standards because learning is enhanced in a safe environment. In particular, **Project Yellow Jackets** embraces the following Cross Content/Workplace Standards which are addressed in authentic real life situations:

- Standard #3 All students will use critical thinking, decision-making and problem solving skills.
- Standard #4 All students will demonstrate self-management skills.
- Standard #5 All students will apply safety principles.

The Cumulative Progress Indicators reflected in each of the above standards provide students with a well grounded foundation for accepting responsibility for their own learning, manifesting positive behaviors and ethics, and respecting and getting along with others. Additionally, the more students practice and demonstrate the skills necessary for creating a safe environment, the more they practice the everyday skills needed to become successful in the workplace. An added benefit is that the **Yellow Jackets** themselves upgrade their own workplace skills and serve as role models so that children see the direct link between workplace readiness and the world of work.

The New Jersey Core Content Curriculum Standards listed below summarize the main standards addressed in **Project Yellow Jackets**.

- Health and Physical Education: Standards 2.3, 2.4
- Language Arts Literacy: Standards 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5
- Science: Standard 5.12
- Social Studies: Standard 6.1
- World Languages: Standard 7.2

As students engage in discussions as well as self and peer assessments, issues in the area of health and the effects of alcohol, tobacco and drug use as well as psychological aspects of family life are addressed along with the five literacy standards. In science, it is essential that youngsters are helped to gain an understanding of the environment and how it is affected by human activity. Standard 6.1 in social studies, all students will learn democratic citizenship, is critical in teaching children to get along with one another. Finally, World Language standard 7.2 which encompasses awareness of different cultures and customs, stereotyping and recognizing and understanding verbal and nonverbal cues within a culture are crucial in fostering sound human relationships.

3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.

Assessment measures used to ascertain to what degree the objectives of **Project Yellow Jackets** have been met are multi-dimensional and ongoing throughout the year. Assessment pieces are compared month to month (when applicable) and year to year. They include: student attendance rates, violence and vandalism incidents, suspension and resuspension rates, anecdotal summaries from teachers, parents and “**yellow jackets**,” records of complaints by parents about the safety and security of students, and mid-term and final examination scores.

There is a great deal of emphasis placed on performance based assessment as student behavior is monitored daily in many real life situations. This involves the development and utilization of intra personal and interpersonal skills needed when faced with confrontational situations within and outside of the school walls.

School wide writing and poster contests focusing on conflict resolution reveal that students not only identify, but are able to evaluate nonviolent strategies to prevent, mediate and resolve conflict. An added component is the evaluative process used by students to critique and choose the pieces submitted to represent their class entries.

Recognition of student effort in the above-mentioned contests is an integral facet of the school-home partnership. Students are awarded affirmations such as certificates, trophies, medals, etc. at the class, school, district and county level.

The Yellow Jackets have also proved useful and effective during exceptional school times by helping to maintain order and safety during special school events such as fire drills, parades, or school related field trips for all grade levels. This provides an added bonus to the program in that parents and community workers, who are also safe passage workers, become active stakeholders in the overall well-being of the school and its students.

There has been a marked decrease in suspensions and in records of complaints about safety from both students and parents. Attendance rates have improved as well. Anecdotal records from teachers, parents, and students reveal a positive turn-around in the school environment as well as the time frame when pupils walk to and from school or during lunch recess. They also reflect marked changes in the lives of the **Yellow Jackets** that make a positive impact on community life. One worker pursued her high school diploma, for example, while yet another enrolled in a community college. The academic area for the children is reflected in the improvement in resolution of conflicts with test scores steadily on the rise. Visitors to the building and Central Office Administrators are very pleased with the noticeable difference in the school environment and the collegiality that has developed between the community and the school.